

# Possession is Nine Tenths of the Game

**Possession Drills:** We do at least one possession drill per practice. These drills are great for teaching players the importance of passing, valuing possession of the ball, finding space and switching fields/ changing direction. These drills may take a time or two before the kids really understand them. Stop often if needed to explain the finer points. While it is important to defend correctly (see ball, see girl) possession drills are not meant to simulate game situations for defenders. Do not just relegate true defenders to defensive positions they MUST learn to handle the ball confidently. I have used variations of these games/drills with players as young as 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. With the younger players you may find that you have to stop the drill frequently in the beginning to point out strategy and to reinforce the rules. With varsity level players you should enforce some of the options like a dropped ball is a turn over.

Start Small by teaching the concepts of possession:

## **When the player has the ball:**

1. Must move ball quickly
2. Don't get caught in a double or corner of grid/field
3. Protect the ball (shoulder/shoulder/ball)
4. No short passes as it accomplishes nothing
5. Pass to where your target will be (not where they are)
6. Give and Go
7. Just because your teammate asks for the ball does not mean they are open

## **When the player does not have the ball:**

1. Change of speed/change of direction to get open (spin dodges work awesome)
2. Use the space wisely, don't crowd
3. Be vocal
4. Never cut closely behind the girl with the ball (allows an easy double for defense)
5. Think ahead to your next decision (if you get ball, what will you do with it)
6. Work with other players to set picks/work together to spring one player free

## **All Drills can be done with the following options:**

1. Neutral Player: Must be in a pinnie that is a different color than either of the two other teams. This player is ALWAYS on offense. This gives the team with the ball a "man up" opportunity.
2. Dropped ball is a turnover.
3. Team with the ball must play non-dominant.

## **Grid Work:**

Adjust size of grid to player's skill level and number of players in grid.

## **Think Fast:**

Set Up: Grid 10 yards x 10 yards (can go from 5 yards x 5 yards up to 15 yards x 15 yards), cones to form grid and balls (put extra balls under the cones)

3 attackers and 2 defenders. Attackers are positioned outside of the grid. Defenders inside. Attack can not go in the grid, D can not come out.

Attack attempts to make passes that go through the grid. Attackers can move on the outside (no cutting through the grid) to get open, though no two attackers may be on the same side simultaneously as another attacker. Once you have the ball you can not cradle more than a few steps. Goal is to eliminate cradle entirely and work on moving the ball quickly. Defenders will tire quickly as they are outnumbered so do not work this drill for more than 45 to 90 seconds if players are working at top speed.

## **2 V 2 or 3 V 3 Five Pass:**

Set Up: 10 yard by 10 yard grid (larger for younger players and/or more players per grid)

Object of the game is to maintain possession and to score points by passing it to teammate(s). 5 consecutive passes is worth one point. Dropped ball or turnover results in pass count back to zero.

Scoring can be handled a few ways:

1. Immediately after making fifth pass game stops. Losing team owes a conditioning element (push-ups, sit-ups, etc.). Game re-starts with winning team maintaining possession.
2. First team to 3 points wins contest. Winners move up to next grid, losers stay.
3. Points are accumulated over duration of game (90 seconds to 4 minutes).

Options: Add in neutral player who is always on the team with possession.

Allow checking

Turn over if ball is dropped (high level of skill needed)

## **Chaos:**

Set-up: Approximately 30 yard x 20 yard Grid. Divide players in to 3 teams. 4 or 5 players maximum per team. Each team should have the same number of players. Can use neutral player(s) if odd number. Teams can be divided evenly by position (Attack, Defenders, Midfield) or mixed.

Start by designating one team as Defense. Other two teams are now together playing Keep-Away from the team designated as Defenders. Thus it is approximately 10 V 5. A turn over (ball intercepted or recovered by the defense or passed out of bounds) changes the team whose player committed the error (bad pass, didn't catch and maintain possession of good pass, got checked and lost ball) to defense, and defenders join the other attacking team. Players MUST take responsibility for their errors so that the rotation occurs correctly. You can keep score by the number of times a team plays defense, or challenge the group to complete a certain number of passes. If they meet the goal, the defending team owes.

### **Ball Keepers/Goal Finders:**

Set Up: Divide group in to two teams (offense on one team, defense on the other, split the midfielders up). Use the full width of the regulation field, with goals placed on each sideline. Drill field width is approx. 30 yards marked with cones (midfield between the two restraining lines works well).



Place a Goalie in each cage, Goalies are part of the defenders team. Defenders attempt to maintain possession of the ball by passing. Attackers attempt to shoot and score on either goal. Defenders get one point for every five complete passes. Attackers get one point for every goal scored.

Version 1: 6 V 6 (extra players are used as substitutes)

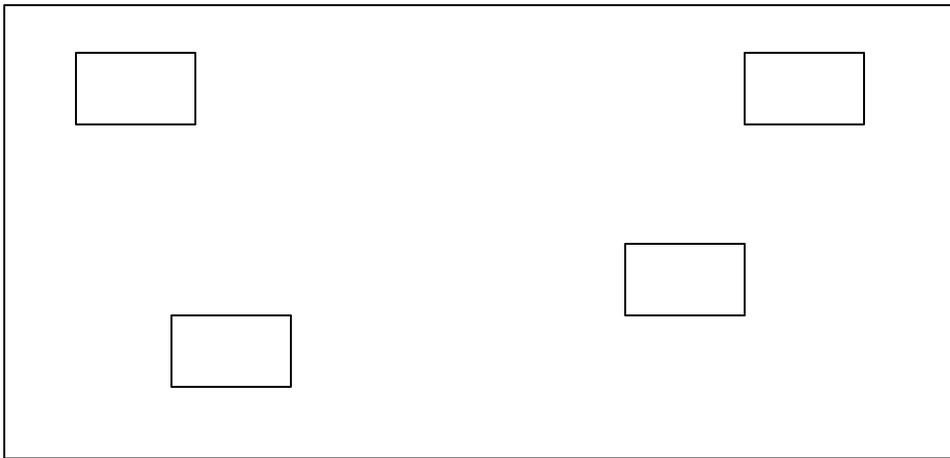
Version 2: 6 V 6 with extra players used as outlet pass. Place extra players outside of the sidelines evenly spaced. When their team has the ball they are active. Inside players can use the outside players to pass to, outside players are NOT defended, can move along the sideline to catch, pass, or move the ball, but may NOT enter the field of play.

Options:

- Can not score at same goal twice in a row
- Vary the number of passes required for a defensive point to be earned
- Allow sideline player to sideline player pass
- Allow checks

### **The Box Game:**

Set-up: Divide players into to two groups (mixed positions). Assign 4 players to play in the “box” position (this can be goalies, field players, injured players who can’t run but are allowed to throw and catch, coaches, or regular field players). Use the full width of the field and the midfield between the two restraining lines. Make 4 boxes spaced around the playing area. Each box should be approximately 10 feet X 10 feet. Place one player in each box, these players are neutral and do not play for a specific team.



Object of the game is to maintain possession and to score points by passing it to the players in the boxes. One point is earned by passing the ball into the player in the box, that player must catch the ball for the point to count. The box player then attempts to pass the ball to a player on the same team as passed her the ball, though she may not pass it back to the player who made the scoring pass. If the ball is dropped by the box player, she can pass it back out to any player on the team who passed it in, they do not get a point but can maintain possession. They must now try and score at a different box. The team without the ball attempts to gain possession by intercepting the ball. Teams can not score in the same box twice in a row unless there was a change of possession in between.

Options: Allow checking

### **The 2 Box Game:**

Set-up: Divide players into two teams (mixed positions). Use the width of the field and the restraining lines as sidelines (though a smaller space can be used). Use cones to make two boxes approximately 15 feet X 15 feet placed as show below.

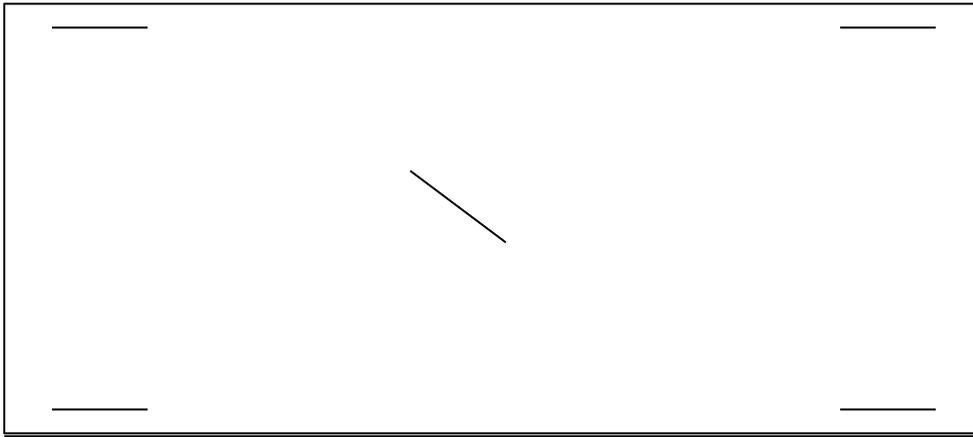


Teams can score in either goal box. To score a team must throw the ball to a teammate who is in the box. They must catch the ball for the point to count. Only one player is allowed in the box at one time, and only players whose team has the ball are allowed in the box. Teams may not score in the same box two times in a row unless they have lost possession of the ball. Teams maintain possession after scoring.

Options: Allow Checking  
Add more boxes  
Possession given to opposing team after a score

### **5 Goal:**

Set-up: Divide players into two teams (mixed positions). Use the full width of the field and the midfield between the two restraining lines. Use cones to make five goals as diagramed below. Goal lines are approximately 6 feet long.

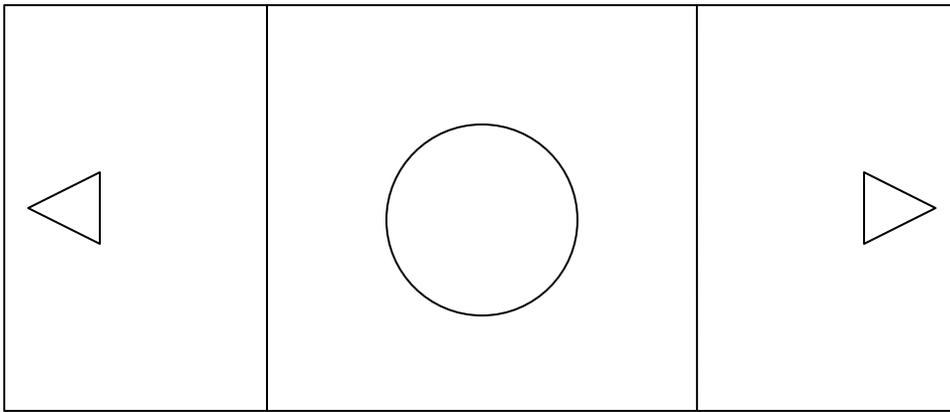


Object of the game is to maintain possession and score points. Each team is assigned two sideline goals, the middle goal is open to both teams. Players attempt to score points in two ways: First by cradling the ball between the cones. After scoring on a sideline goal, the ball is given to the other team. The second way to score is by completing a pass over the middle goal. After scoring a middle goal point the scoring team keeps the ball and continues play.

Options: Allow checking

### **Zone game:**

Set-up: Regulation field. Divide players into two groups (mixed positions), assign players to specific Zones. Once assigned to a zone, players will identify who they are assigned to for person to person defense. Field is divided into 3 zones using the restraining lines. Assign 3 players from each team to each of the two zones from restraining line to goal (usually for attack zone that will be dedicated attackers and for defensive zone it will be dedicated defenders), midfielders take the middle zone (4 or 5 players per team).



Object of the game is to pass the ball from zone to zone working it down for a shot on goal. Players must remain in the zone they are assigned. This game is great because you can utilize more than the traditional 12 v 12 if you make it 5 v 5 or 4 v 4 in each zone.

Options: Allow Checking  
 If a pass is completed from one zone to the next zone allow the player who made the pass join that zone, creating an overload  
 Change the number of players in the zone....this works great if you have a large number of players you wish to involve. For example you could do a 5 v 5 in each of the zones. That gets 30 players active.

### **5 V 1 Three Pass**

Set Up: Drill can be executed in many ways...inside a gym, restraining line to goal, or in a grid. You can play it with or without a goal/goalie. Offensive players are set up in a box plus one in the middle (like the five on dice). If using a goal then two players should be below GLE, two outside the 12 meter and one inside the 8. Set up a cone outside the playing area for the defenders (we typically have them enter from the restraining line). Offensive players must remain in the general area they begin the drill at until they reach a 5 v 5 situation then they can move wherever they want to attack the goal.

Object of Game: Drill starts with a 5 vs. 1. Once three passes are completed another defender may join in. Once two defenders are playing one must always be on the center player. Through communicating they may switch who is defending the center player. The object is to deny that pass in to the middle while forcing the other players to maintain possession making intelligent passes. after every three completed passes another defender joins in. Once the 5th defender is activated the 5 attacking players can go to goal (moving freely through the space)

Options:

1. Allow a shot on goal if the attacking team can make a pass in to the girl in the center
2. Allow checking
3. If running drill without a cage to shoot on allow attack to move from designated spots after third defender enters continue adding defenders after each three passes is completed until defense gains possession.

## **4 V 2 Continuous in two boxes**

Set up: 15 yards x 30 yards rectangle. Divide rectangle in half. Divide players in to two teams (red and blue for the purposes of explanation). I like to intermix positions. Place a cone for each team outside the playing area. Start with four red players and two blue in one box. Two blue players in the other box. Remaining players in line on their respective team's cone.

Object of game: Four players in their offensive box (Box A) attempt to retain possession by passing the ball among the four players on their team. Two defending players attempt to intercept the ball or force a bad pass. If defenders come up with ball or ball is passed out of bounds it is a turnover. The team that was defending immediately throws the ball to their teammates in the other box (Box B) and join them. Two of the players from Box A run over to play defense. The two players that remain in Box A are replaced by players in line.

Options:

1. Allow checking.
2. If you don't want to have players waiting you can play with only four players per team.
3. Keep score. Three consecutive passes equal a point.
4. Turn Over if ball is dropped.
5. Make boxes larger or smaller
6. Change to 5 v 3 or 6 v 4

Competitive drills make competitive players!

Players learn that possession through smart passing, and off ball movement brings great success.

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